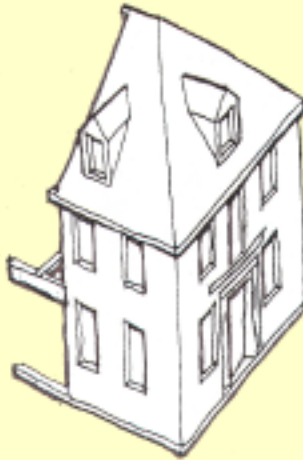




The First New Hampshire State House in 1987
Image Courtesy of Pirini-Howe Photographers



Conjectural Drawing of the Portion of the First State House Saved in 1836
Image Courtesy of Salmon Falls Architects



Conjectural Drawing of the First State House
Image Courtesy of Bill Paarlberg

New Hampshire's First State House Project

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources first State House project, supported by an Economic Development Grant (EDI) from Housing and Urban Development (HUD,) will explore the building's value as a historical artifact and a catalyst for heritage tourism in New Hampshire and will plan for the future use, administration and maintenance of the first New Hampshire State House. Built in 1758 in Portsmouth, the first State House was the seat of New Hampshire's colonial government. Dismantled in 1836, one third of the building's frame was removed to Portsmouth's Court Street and survived after being converted into a townhouse. In 1969, the State of New Hampshire purchased the building and moved it to Strawberry Banke Museum to await restoration. After two decades of delay, the structure was removed from Strawberry Banke Museum in 1990. An historic structures report was prepared and the building elements marked, placed into storage, and moved to Concord. The 493 numbered pieces in storage comprise a two and a half story 30'x30'6" structure. The components consist mostly of major framing members, sheathing, floor boards, and some architectural elements, the latter dating to the reuse of the structure in the 1830's.

Previous planning efforts have proposed that the building be reassembled to serve as a welcome center and point of orientation to the many museums and historical sites of Portsmouth, and the greater seacoast area. Despite a general acceptance of this plan, there has been no consensus regarding the location of the building, the assignment of responsibility for its reconstruction and administration, the programming it will support, or the audience it will serve. This project will address these questions through five principal activities:

1. the examination, stabilization, and conservation of the building components;
2. an assessment of the best uses and needs of the first State House and the interpretive stories it can convey;
3. a study of the economic benefits of heritage and cultural tourism in New Hampshire's coastal region;
4. an assessment of the best location, the widest possible audience, and the most logical operational structure for a seacoast visitors' center; and
5. a series of public charrettes or planning sessions, to ensure inclusion of the widest range of public comment.

Consultants who are recognized as authorities in their respective fields will carry out each phase of the process, including the facilitation of public informational meetings and charrettes. Computer-assisted drawings and models of the building components will illustrate the potential role of the first State House in each phase of study. At a concluding two-day retreat, the planning team will synthesize the gathered data and public comment and, with the project director, will compile an analysis of the economic benefit of the various recommended uses of the resource known as the first New Hampshire State House. All interested communities, planning and historical institutions, and interested citizens are invited to share their ideas and insights in the service of two principal goals: the restoration and interpretation of a historically significant resource, and the enhancement of cultural and heritage tourism in one of the longest-settled regions of the eastern United States. For more information on the first State House project or to share your ideas or comments, please contact us at preservation@dcr.nh.gov.